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EDUCATION POLICY FORMULATION AND EXECUTION ISSUES IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

The concept "Philosophy of Nigerian Education" has two key words that need to be defined from the onset for a better understanding of the topic, namely, "Education" and "Philosophy". Taneja, (1984) has explicitly explained these key words. Etymologically, the word "education" is derived from the Latin word "educio"- "educare", meaning to bring up, to rear, to lead, both mentally and morally. Education brings out to light every latent virtue in man towards perfection. Mahatma Gandhi thus stressed that education means an all-round drawing out of the best in the educand is body, mind and spirit For Dewey, education is the development of all those capacities in the individual, which will enable him to control his environment and fulfill his possibility. Every other good definition of "education" differs from the above only in terms of vocabulary. Thus, for example, Aristotle.

Abstract

The constraints associated with the execution of the National Policy on Education qualify Nigeria to be described as a DINSOME: Noisy Country This article examines the policy's philosophy. It is observed that the policy is brilliantly conceived and excellently documented. Its provisions have the foresight and dynamism capable of launching the nation into the yearning for unity, stability and advance in science and technology. In practice, however, only few aspects of the policy have been realized while the rest remain a mirage. The blames are apportioned to many factors among which are government consistent poor attitude towards the education sector and lack of seriousness on the part of policy executers. It also advocated among others,

Government policy should be geared continuously toward reviewing the National policy on Education in order to suit our contemporary needs. It also examine concept of policy.

Keywords: Education, policy, formulation execution, philosophy.

Plato's disciple reiterated that education develops faculty, especially the mind, so that one may be able to enjoy the supreme truth, goodness and beauty in which perfect happiness essentially consists.

Education is thus the process of development from the cradle to the grave. Such development helps man to improve his environment and to modify his behaviour so that he can now behave more rationally. Education thus emancipates man from his small self to an altruistic and social self-Philosophy, on the other hand, is a word which, conveys the referent's beliefs, values and ideals formulated in terms of pure thought. The word is derived from two Greek words -philia meaning "love" and sophia meaning "wisdom" or "knowledge". It is love of wisdom, love of knowledge or love of inquiry into the unknown with the view to having clearer understanding of the issue or problem. It involves knowledge, thinking, logical reasoning and understanding which enable one to act wisely. It is the medium through which man exercises superior intelligence, rationality, creativity and dynamism.

Philosophy then has been the grandparent of other disciplines. It is at home with, .the pure sciences (hence philosophy of science), with education (hence philosophy of education); with Mathematics (hence philosophy of Mathematics). As an academic discipline, it is a body of knowledge that has to be studied, mastered and its tenets applied. It employs logical thought processes, analysis, comparison and evaluation as its basic tools of inquiry.

When the question 'education for what?' is posed, it is philosophy, which deals with the broader aspects of direction, purpose and effects. Philosophy helps in the formulation of aims and objectives, curriculum, methods of teaching, etc. to suit the needs of the contemporary society. Educational philosophy has three functions, (Okeke, I 989). They are listed as follows;

1. Normative function - here man's values, actions and problems are explained and then norms, goals and standards are set;
2. Critical function - a penetrating and searching look is cast on every aspect of education comprising its substance, content and validity;

3. Speculative (synthetic) function - facts, data, knowledge or experience gathered from various sources are analyzed and a synthetic picture is given for a valid conclusion.

How are these functions reflected in the 1981 (Revised) National Policy on Education (NPE) and to what extent has the Policy been realized?

THE NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (NPE)

Since it is indisputable that philosophy is the best weighing balance for educational theories and practices, it becomes expedient that a nation adopts a sound philosophy of education in order to serve the basic needs of the society. Unfortunately, the education system inherited by Nigeria at independence (1960) was not directly relevant to the actual needs and aspirations of the indigenous people. According to Nwosu (1989), since the education then originated outside the cultural milieu of the educands, its aims were tailored to suit the foreigners.

To arrest this situation, a National Curriculum Conference (8th – 12th Sept; 1969) was organized by the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC) to deliberate on educational objectives that would be more meaningful and more realistic to the Nigerian society. The Conference was to review the existing systems, identify new goals and provide guidelines for the achievement of those goals with special reference to:

- (a) The needs of Nigerian youths and adults;
- (b) The country's socio-economic needs, values, aspirations and development; and
- (c) The subject content of the system.

This National Curriculum Conference ignited yet subsequent workshops and seminars aimed at carving a sound philosophical foundation for our educational system. For example, the National Primary Education Workshop on Teacher Education (1971), the first National Secondary School Workshop (1973), and the Second National Secondary School Workshop (1974). From these workshops emerged the National Policy on Education (1977), revised (1981), which was a significant attempt not only to plan but also to develop education to such a level that it would enhance the progress of the nation. Wonderful in theory but still unachievable up to date, the Policy was based on a national philosophy which aims at creating:

1. A free and democratic society;
2. A just and egalitarian society;
3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation;
4. A great and dynamic economy;
5. A land of bright and foil opportunities for all citizens (FRN 1981s).

A brief analysis of these objectives will leave nobody in doubt that we are yet to start the implementation of the NPE twenty years later;

1. A free and democratic society implies a situation which guarantees individual and political freedom; free and peaceful assembly and association. It recognizes the fundamental human rights like the right to life, right to humane treatment, right to personal liberty, private and family life, and freedom from forced labour and slavery. In a free and democratic society, people have the absolute right to choose who governs them through free and fair elections and through the active participation of the citizenry in government. It also implies respect for the individuals and decisions are based on consensus reached through consultation, discussion and persuasion rather than by coercion.
2. While a just society means a society in which all citizens are equal before the law, an egalitarian society, is one in which individuals have equal opportunities for personal development and in which there is a fair distribution and acquisition of available resources.
3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation is a cardinal national objective. A united nation that one predicated on equal citizenship. It enhances unity in diversity despite our multicultural differences. A strong nation is one that can maintain cohesion among her citizens and effectively defend her territorial integrity. It is also respected by other nations. To be self-reliant implies the capacity to harness and use mainly local resources for agricultural, commercial and industrial development
4. A land of bright and full opportunities for all citizens is where the people are given functional education and where optimum efforts are made to eliminate or reduce unemployment to the barest minimum. It also implies a place where there is no discrimination in employment and other state benefits on the basis of ethnic, religious or social status.

These national objectives are matched with the national educational aims and objectives to which the philosophy is linked, namely (NPE Section 1:5).

1. The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;
2. The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
3. The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around, and,
4. The acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical, as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of his society.

Section 1 (3) spells out the quality of instruction aimed at inculcating the following values.

1. Respect for the worth and dignity of the individual;
2. Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions;
3. Moral and spiritual values in inter-personal and human relations;
4. Shared responsibility for the common good of society;
5. Respect for the dignity of labour; and
6. Promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.

Among the twelve measures that government is expected to take to ensure the implementation of these objectives are (Section 1:7) that

1. Education will continue to be highly rated in the national development plans, because education is the most important instrument of change as any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution;
2. Educational activity will be centred on the learner for maximum self-development and fulfillment;
3. Efforts will be made to relate education to the overall community needs;
4. Educational assessment and evaluation will be liberated by basing them in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individual;
5. Modern educational techniques will be increasingly used and improved upon at all levels of the education system;

6. The education system will be structured to develop the practice of self-learning;
7. Physical education will be emphasized at all levels of the education system.

CONCEPT OF POLICY

As societies develop, so problems arise. These problems are mostly social in nature. As these problems vary in nature, so do people's method of searching for ways to remove or contain these problems are well planned and put to the people as policies. Solving problems through the use of policies started right from the creation man Adam was faced with problem of identifying or differentiating one animal from the other. Adam made a policy of naming them (Genesis: 19-20).

A policy is simply a course of action. This course of action enables one to arrange the activities in an orderly sequence which will make it easy for the person to act.

Educational policies are social problems that require social policies to remove or contain them. Glasson (1982), sees social policies as having the features of general planning whose features include a sequence of actions which are designed to solve problems in the future resulting from an anticipated or presently existing problems. Educationally, Edem (1990) view policy as the thinking at a high level of abstraction which expresses education goals and the means of achieving them. It is the basis of day-to-day administration as a guide to administrators when deciding the line along which the educational system should be conducted.

PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Policies in Nigeria are well formulated, brilliantly planned, well stated but poorly or never implemented. Obviously, the National policy on Education is a dependable document, brilliantly conceived and excellently documented. Its provision have a foresight and dynamism which can be a relevant launching pad to our yearning for national unity, stability and advancement of science and technological education. In practice, however, only few aspects of the policy are being realized while the rest remain a mirage. This unfortunate situations could be blamed on a number of factors: -

- a) Military incursion into the political affairs of the country (out of the 55 years of the country's independence).
- b) Lack of determination on the part of policy implementers;
- c) Ethnic chauvinism, leading often to the placement of unsuitable personnel to man education;
- d) Religious intolerance;
- e) Lack of patriotic leadership;
- f) Government's consistent poor attitude toward the education sub-sector manifested in dishonest financial allocations to the sector and in the apathy towards teacher's welfare.

Primary education which is the foundation upon which the rest of the education system is built (Unimna, 1998), has continued to register more failure than success. Its first assignment to inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively is seriously lacking in our public schools. Hardly can primary school graduands read the simplest words, let alone make simple correct sentences. There is little or no development of manipulative skills as the teaching of arts, crafts and music as well as agricultural skills are seriously de-emphasized. The interim teacher-pupil ratio of 1:40 is still far from being realized, let alone the real target of 1:30. Quality primary education is for the few rich ones who can afford to pay fees, in private schools like the Nursery/ Primary Schools.

At the secondary school level, one also finds a large constellation of problems. The 3-3 system here was conceived to make the junior secondary school both pre-vocational and academic. At the end of the junior school, performance must have revealed those to go for vocational training and those that will be able and willing to complete the six-year secondary education, which is more comprehensive in nature. Unfortunately, this outline is not followed at all. The junior secondary education is hardly officially terminal for anybody.

Besides, there are no adequate trade and vocational centres to take care of those who would otherwise fit in here. Consequently, all the junior secondary school leavers often transit to the senior school system without minding their academic ability. At the end, teachers and principals collude in "letting" the students through if only to protect their own tenure and the image of the school. The attendant wide spread examination irregularities become the order of the day, leaving us with secondary school leavers who cannot defend their certificates. The only exceptions to this malady may be the unity schools, the Air Force, Navy, Army, Police, University staff secondary schools as well as privately run secondary schools. When we discountenance these few exceptions (as compared to the number of public secondary schools that chum out the majority of candidates for post-secondary education in the

country), we can understand the re-cycled problem of quality in our education system. (Denga, 1998).

This constitutes a frightening alarm when one realizes that our secondary school education continues to be more of a preparation for higher education than square up with piepm ingits products for a useful living. And of course, these higher institutions exhibit an easy readiness to admit whoever can afford the school fees. Thus, JAMB via the UME and PCE is subverted by internal admission arrangements such as Remedial (for universities and Polytechnics) and Pre-NCE (for Colleges of Education) programmes. With this eventual poor caliber of students, cultism and other academic frauds have become major and almost normal phenomena in our higher institutions of learning.

CONCLUSION

The task of the National Policy on Education is a colossal one that needs an articulate and relentless effort by all and sundry. An evaluation of Policy has to be a continuous process. Seminars and workshops have to be continuously held for all groups of individuals that have to do with the education sub-sector. Value-oriented education should be given emphasis in schools as against inert knowledge. Teacher matters should not be toyed with if we truly believe that "no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers" (NPE, Section 9:57). Some key recommendations become imperative at this point.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The forces that negate true national cohesion and unity have to be put in check. Since tribalism or ethnicism is a strong force against this wish efforts should be made to detribalize Nigerians. To that end, a policy should be evolved to make it possible for citizens to live, work, own landed property and fill any elective position in any part of the country. Tribe, the so-called place of origin, etc. should be expunged from our official documents.
2. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme should indeed be sustained and improved upon.
3. An honest search for a Lingua Franca for Nigeria should be pursued as common language is a very-strong cohesive tool (.Unimna, 1998)
4. If individual and societal needs were actually planned for by the NPE, it is obvious that those needs have been supplanted by new ones. These new needs should be carefully identified and planned for in a revised policy. Good enough, the conclusion to the introduction to the NPE admits that "since education is a dynamic instrument of change, this

policy will need to be constantly reviewed to ensure its adequacy and continued relevance to national needs and objectives".

5. Appropriate arrangements should be made not only to have competently trained teachers for the education sub-sector but also to adequately motivate, attract and retain such staff in the classroom;
6. A proper Continuous Assessment (CA) system should be adopted and enforced to make it possible and easy to sift the less academically inclined from the others and encourage each person to pursue only what he is fit for:
7. The education sub-sector should be properly funded and supervised by the government mainly and other NGOs. Government's main task is to provide social amenities and education is a social amenity designed by the society to develop its citizens. In the final analysis, proper funding of education is the answer to such development.

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